

REMARKS

The present Amendment revises the Abstract and claims to improve their form under U.S. patent practice. It also adds a new independent claim 10 to further protect the invention, and relocates the "Background of the invention" section heading.

Section 1 of the Office Action rejects independent claim 1 (along with several dependent claims) on the basis of prior art acknowledged in the application in view of U.S. patent 6,460,099 to Stryker et al (which will hereafter be called simply "Stryker"). The Stryker reference discloses several techniques for enabling and disabling mass storage devices in the passage from the middle of column 4 to the top portion of column 5. In the technique that Stryker appears to favor, an unused address in control block registers of an ATA mass storage device is used for address decoding logic (see column 7, lines 53-56). The problem with this approach is that a register that is currently unused in an ATA interface may be used in the future, when the ATA specifications are revised. Stryker's approach might therefore create incompatibilities as time goes on.

In contrast, the embodiment shown in Figure 1 (for example) of the present application's drawings has an "external machine" 40 that detects a specific sequence in a message in accordance with a non-standard controlling procedure and is then able to isolate an "external connection box" 50 using a "separator" 42.

It should also be noted that, once the "external machine" 40 in Applicants' Figure 1 is enabled, it can then communicate directly with the software, and thus can serve diverse functions. Such an advantage is not suggested by Stryker's arrangement.

It is respectfully submitted that the method that is defined by claim 1 would not have been obvious, to an ordinarily skilled person, from the prior art acknowledged from the application in view of Stryker. For one thing, the Office Action cites the paragraph at page 1 of the present application, lines 11-17, for the proposition that the prior art includes a non-standard controlling procedure and a specific message. However, this paragraph clearly pertains to the present invention, not the prior art (in order to avoid the possibility of confusion in this regard, the present Amendments moves the "Background of the Invention" heading to a position below this paragraph). For another thing, claim 1 recites that "a specific message of the non-standard controlling procedure can be identified by the external machine, and a normal message of the standard procedure and the specific message are transferred by the same cable." Despite Stryker's use of a single-channel ATA mass storage interface that is capable of interfacing with more than two storage devices (see column 4 of the reference, lines 8-10), nothing in the reference would suggest that Stryker's ATA interface 52 carries messages in accordance with both the ATA protocol and a non-ATA protocol. Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that the rejection of claim 1 for obviousness should be withdrawn.

Section 2 of the Office Action rejects independent claim 3 (and several dependent claims) for obviousness on the basis of the acknowledged prior art in view of Stryker and in further view of a Japanese reference. A copy of the Japanese reference has been downloaded, and is attached hereto in order to supply a copy of the drawing.

What the Japanese reference appears to show is a radio base station 12 that combines message data and music data, and a downstream station 19 that plays the music and that also displays video information with the message superimposed on it. It is, of course, quite unlikely that an ordinarily skilled person who wanted to improve the prior art acknowledged in the present application (or Stryker's arrangement, either, for that matter) would think that hints for such improvement might be found in the radio entertainment field. That is, it is respectfully submitted that the Japanese reference pertains to a non-analogous art and should therefore not be presumed to be known by the person who is ordinarily skilled in the art to which the present invention pertains.

Claim 3 now recites "means for executing a software program that cooperates with a standard controlling procedure and a non-standard controlling procedure, the software program operating the standard controlling procedure and the non-standard controlling procedure so as to make" a temporary store device in an external machine "selectively activate and to generate normal and specific messages to be transferred by" a cable. Such a means is not suggested by either the acknowledged prior art or by the Stryker reference. And even if an ordinarily skilled person were presumed to be aware of the existence of the Japanese reference, despite the above argument to the contrary, such a means was not disclosed by the Japanese reference, either.

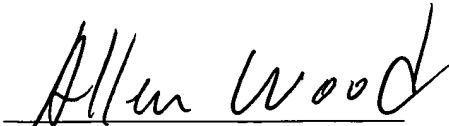
New independent claim 10 recites first, second, and third units. The first unit has "means for executing software, including a standard control procedure in accordance with an ATA protocol and a non-standard control procedure that is not in accordance with the ATA protocol." The second unit has a mass storage device. Claim 10 also recites "an

ATA cable having a first end that is connected to the first unit." The third unit is connected to a second end of the ATA cable, and the second unit is also connected to the second end by way of a separator. Claim 10 concludes with a "wherein" clause which recites that "the separator is controlled by a signal from the third unit so as to disconnect the second unit from the second end of the ATA cable if the third unit detects a message in accordance with a non-standard control procedure." This is not suggested by the acknowledged prior art. Nor is there any suggestion in the Stryker reference that Stryker's ATA interface carries a message in accordance with a control procedure that is not in accordance with the ATA protocol to a unit that then activates a separator in order to separate one of Stryker's ports 12-18 from his ATA interface 52. Furthermore, the Japanese reference has nothing that would suggest the "wherein" clause of claim 10.

Since the remaining claims depend from the independent claims discussed above and recite additional limitations to further define the invention, they are patentable along with their independent claims and need not be further discussed.

For the foregoing reasons, it is respectfully submitted that the application is now in condition for allowance. Reconsideration of the application is therefore respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Allen Wood". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

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